
PROBLEMS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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Abstract: There is a general feeling in India that the situation in higher education is unsatisfactory and even alarming in some ways, that the average standards have been falling and that rapid expansion has resulted in lowering quality. A large proportion of teachers suffer from financial worries - particularly in colleges where grades are low - and are often unable to buy any books or journals. Usually, there is one staff common room which is not large enough even to accommodate all the members of the faculty. The hierarchical concentration of authority within the departments and colleges, the atmosphere of distrust between senior and junior teachers, the cynicism about administrative authorities, the unseemly conflicts about offices even and positions and the attitude of every towards persons of superior attainments - all have contributed to the deadening of the spirit of intellectual curiosity and adventure. In any social system, higher education has its due place. It provides valuable inputs for intellectual excellence, innovation and leadership which are the basic ingredients for the advancement of society in the modern world. Higher education in India, especially the university system, is in a deep crisis and full of troubles. The major source of finance for the universities is state governments concern. Given the parliamentary form of government as laid down in our constitution and the further fact that politicians and their behaviour in democratic societies do not change easily. Objective of the present study is to examine the Problems of Higher Education in India. Introduction

Introduction: There is a general feeling in India that the situation in higher education is unsatisfactory and even alarming in some ways, that the average standards have been falling and that rapid expansion has resulted in lowering quality. In view of the difficulties inherent in the objective measurement of standards over a given period and as no serious attempt to measure standards has been undertaken so far, it is difficult to say definitely to what extent and in what respects, they have been falling. The system of higher education in India is one of the biggest man making enterprises in the world. The system has grown by way of an answer of the rise in demand, which by itself is the consequence of escalation of expectations on the part of the people. Most of the universities in India are still functioning with out-dated procedures, rules and regulations. In this context, the Education Commission aptly pointed out that "The pattern of university administration in India has not only become obsolete, but has never received that kind of specialised consideration and planning which are needed to design the policies and techniques and practice and machinery for decision-making need, for a forward looking and dynamic economic organisation. The expenditure on higher education has gone down per student enrolled in the colleges and the universities. The institutions are still financed on norms that are impracticable today, and as a result there are problems born out of frustration. We cannot afford to modernise and enrich education in keeping with the demand of the times. The present system is subject to the general malaise of weak and inefficient administrations, a certain measure of lack of morality, and of pressure politics. Students have a

streak of idealism and emotionality, and are relatively innocent in judging social behaviour. It does not go to the root of the matter or bring out the fundamentals or basics of the problem.

Objective: Objectives of the present study is to examine the Problems of Higher Education in India

Source: the present study is based on the secondary data

Problems in Higher Education in India: There is a general feeling in India that the situation in higher education is unsatisfactory and even alarming in some ways, that the average standards have been falling and that rapid expansion has resulted in lowering quality. In view of the difficulties inherent in the objective measurement of standards over a given period and as no serious attempt to measure standards has been undertaken so far, it is difficult to say definitely to what extent and in what respects, they have been falling. The content and quality are inadequate for our present needs and future requirements, and compare unfavourably with the average standards in other educationally advanced countries. Many of our educationists and public men, however, have not fully realized how serious are the actual conditions, academic and physical, that obtain in the colleges and universities. There is little enthusiasm for learning or discovery of new truths „ because research is not considered an integral part of their duties and whatever research is done is usually of unconvincing quality. In the absence of a 'research impregnated' atmosphere, even the intellectually ambitious younger members of the staff are soon caught up in the general atmosphere of indifference or cynicism. A large proportion of teachers suffer from financial worries - particularly in colleges

where grades are low - and are often unable to buy any books or journals. Usually, there is one staff common room which is not large enough even to accommodate all the members of the faculty. The hierarchical concentration of authority within the departments and colleges, the atmosphere of distrust between senior and junior teachers, the cynicism about administrative authorities, the unseemly conflicts about offices even and positions and the attitude of every towards persons of superior attainments - all have contributed to the deadening of the spirit of intellectual curiosity and adventure. The situation with regard to the students is not better. When the medium is an Indian language, there is a dearth of suitable textbooks and supplementary literature necessary to achieve competence in their subjects. Many of them cannot be expected to read textbooks in English because it has not become for them the language of the library. In the past, need for a better, more effective education was not felt so keenly because, so long as India did not supply the higher cadres of its own ruling class - or did so valuable research contributions. And it should make an effort to provide adequate facilities and satisfactory conditions of work.

Education system in India is at cross roads now. It is subjected to bitter criticism. The quality of education is dwindling. Education a problem solving instrument has become a problem generating mechanism. The goals of secularism, socialism, democracy and professional ethics are under mounting threat. The problems of higher education are to be viewed in terms of its accessibility, quality, quantity, utility and financial outlay. The quality of higher education mostly depends on quality of content, technique of teaching, quality of teachers and extent of infrastructure and standards of students. Many people are expressing dissatisfaction with the structure of higher education, functioning of educational institutions, standards in higher education, the quality of teachers and quality of students. If we do not attend the ills of the system it will become a national disaster. We express dissatisfaction with the structure of education, with the functioning of educational institutions, with the behaviour of teachers as well as students, and with the standards that are said to prevail.

One of the most prominent features of our educational system has been its tremendous expansion. Rate of expansion is perhaps unparalleled in the history of any country without consolidation. This unprecedented expansion manifests itself in the form of unemployment of the educated. The expenditure on higher education has gone down per student enrolled in the colleges and the universities.

The institutions are still financed on norms that are impracticable today, and as a result there are problems born out of frustration. We cannot afford to modernise and enrich education in keeping with the demand of the times. The present system is subject to the general malaise of weak and inefficient administrations, a certain measure of lack of morality, and of pressure politics. Students have a streak of idealism and emotionality, and are relatively innocent in judging social behaviour. It does not go to the root of the matter or bring out the fundamentals or basics of the problem.

Higher Education:

Constraints and Strains: The system of higher education in India is one of the biggest man making enterprises in the world. The system has grown by way of an answer of the rise in demand, which by itself is the consequence of escalation of expectations on the part of the people. It indicates the faith that the people have come to repose in education as an instrument of change. Perceived thus, the increase in the demand for education, particularly higher education, is an indicator of a healthy civic attitude on the part of the citizens of the democracy, and therefore, deserving all the possible encouragement by the state.

In any social system, higher education has its due place. It provides valuable inputs for intellectual excellence, innovation and leadership which are the basic ingredients for the advancement of society in the modern world.

The constraints: There are five major constraints on the system:

1. Philosophical constraints;
2. Cultural constraints;
3. Economic constraints
4. Operational constraints
5. Managerial constraints.

This philosophical constraint underlies the psychomoral-intellectual vacuum the Indian higher educational scenario suffers from. The agonising part is its manifestation in the meaninglessness of the pursuit in the classrooms and on the campuses. This gets reflected in symptoms like agitations, strikes, work to rule movements, boycotts of examinations etc.

The cultural constraints are too obvious as witnessed in the people's attitudes to each other and towards their work. Anthropologically culture is a very powerful determinant of a person's perceptions of his roles as a member of society and the quality of the acquittal of his role. Education has been recognised as a potent acculturating force the world over. It is also recognised as liberating and empowering force. But, in order that it fulfils these missions, it must be allowed to operate in a cultural environment of

freedom, fairness, and encouragement. The target of excellence has been a far cry in almost of all departments of our academic life. The work culture that prevails in our academic world bears no relevance to the looming challenges of globalisation and market friendly economy that are sought to be introduced in Indian life.

It is these economic constraints, among others, that have slowed down the process of qualitative improvement in areas of curriculum reconstruction, examination reform, teacher training, enrichment of infra-structural facilities, student services programme, open learning system, and R&D in higher education. It's a matter of grave concern for us to know that 40 per cent of our colleges that are non viable will ever acquire a modicum of resources that should justify existence as modest centers of higher learning. It's also a matter of equally serious concern how long the meritorious students from poorer sections will continue to be denied their fundamental right to education by being asked to pay capitation fees for admission and for subsequent continuance in the courses they are admitted to.

The managerial constraints that plague the system of higher education are a legacy of our colonial past that is ill at ease with the democratic present. For more than a century we have administered education through a culture of command and control at all levels. Participative management as a modern strategy adopted in industry and business is a recent arrival in the field of education.

Unfortunately, these constraints persist in the system in one form or another and unvarying degrees, setting at thought our plans like the NEP (1986) at the macro level and institutional plans for improvement and excellence at the micro level.

The Strains: While the system works under the five-fold constraints, it is also subjected to five-fold strains that further diminish its capability as an instrument of development of the youthful human resource of the country. The strains are:

1. systematic strains,
2. demographic strains,
3. developmental strains,
4. political strains,
5. ethical strains.

These strains exert pressure on the already fragile system and threaten its very existence. Among these the systematic are built in the structural organisation of our higher education, which is characterised by the affiliating mode bequeathed by the British, it is strictly hierarchical and therefore, dependent upon a bureaucracy whose work style harks back to the colonial past. Many a college and university in India have been experiencing these systematic strains and their first victim is the rules of law that must inter

relate various subsystems into a cohesive organism. This does not happen very often, and so we witness the phenomenon of disintegration of the structure. One example of this is the cross purposes at which various constituents of a university or a college work. The demographic strains are simply frightening, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Instructions and classrooms are bursting at the seams. The result is proliferation of number. It seems the rising tide is unpreventable because the population of the country is multiplying and newer sections of population are entering the precincts of higher education. And recently the Supreme Court of India having declared education of all levels a fundamental right of the citizen, the trend is likely to increase in the years to come.

Qualitatively the first generation learners are increasingly swelling the ranks of college-going population. Gender wise women's participation is increasing at a greater pace. Region wise, the hitherto un-served areas are establishing new universities and colleges in a large number. Specialised higher education institutions are also added to the fraternity. This flood in number and diversity has put to considerable strain the age old mechanism, its facilities and offerings. The first casualty of this demographic deluge is the quality of life on the campuses and the quality of education imparted there. This leads to the developmental strains of the system. Higher education is an organic comprising several subsystems all of which are supposed to be welded into coherent whole, this can happen only if the developmental process that goes on constantly is a healthy, multidimensional process of unfolding and, thereby, of growing healthily.

Students can understand the diverse cultural and social systems of the people living in different parts of the country. In higher education in general, and technical education in particular, steps are needed to facilitate inter-regional mobility by providing equal access to every Indian of requisite merit, regardless of his origins.

Problems of University: Higher education in India, especially the university system, is in a deep crisis and full of troubles. The situation has been deteriorating rapidly. Towards the end of 1986, more than 50 universities were closed for one reason or the other. The troubles vary in magnitude and intensity from a simple and peaceful boycott of classes to widespread violence, assault, and even to murder on the other. It has almost become strange and uncommon for universities to remain unclosed and work normally. The administrators have a sigh of relief by the evening if no problem crops up during the day and they are not geared by any group on that day. The students, staff - teaching and non-teaching - and the

administrators are unhappy over the functioning and the problems in universities; while government and public are equally disappointed on the future of university education in India. Student's agitations have now become a gesture of common occurrence in all the universities.

Financial problems of universities are due to mismanagement. There is often considerable delay or even failure to realise the amounts due to the universities from various sources. New courses and departments are started without a frank and careful examination of the financial implications. Amounts earmarked for one item of expenditure are diverted for other purposes. There has been gross financial mismanagement, wasteful expenditure and development schemes have been cut to meet the deficit. Thus, the problem of university management is becoming acute and unmanageable every day. Whether it is the examinations or the teaching load, or the Karmacharis' demands, the whole system is ridden the internal conflicts. In fact, it is becoming increasingly difficult to speak of any system of higher education whatsoever. There is a complete breakdown of relationship between the teacher and the student; between the university authorities and the teachers on the one hand and the students on the other; and between academic and administrative authorities and the Karmacharis. Considerable outside political pressure is felt in the institutions of higher learning.

Political Interference or Lack of Will of the Administration to Protect Autonomy: Given the parliamentary form of government as laid down in our constitution and the further fact that politicians and their behaviour in democratic societies do not change easily. Such a view not tantamount to saying that for all practical purposes, the situation is virtually irremediable? In fact, it would be a more correct diagnosis to suggest that the university authorities, the politicians and the people at large are hand in glove with one another in perpetuating the present state of affairs; the politician alone is not to blame.

Symptoms of the crisis: To mention some of the symptoms of the crisis - the admission policies are failing to keep out a vast number of students who have neither the motivation nor suitability to profit from higher education; the selection and appointment of teachers is bedeviled by many problems, and the work climate neither encourages performance nor is conducive to striving for excellence. In many places there is too much centralization, particularly of the financial functions, and the decision making processes are slow and inefficient.

Recruitment of Students: At present our students

tend by and large, to be recruited locally or on a state wise basis and except for a few all-India institutions, the small number of students of superior capacity is usually swamped by the large numbers of those who are not well prepared for intensive higher education. In such a situation, many of the good students lose their motivation for intellectual work and neither fulfills their own potentialities nor stimulates one another adequately as they normally should in a good institution.

Student Services: A major weakness of the existing system of education is the failure to provide adequately for student welfare. All institutions of higher education should organize orientation programmes for their new students in the beginning of the academic year. Senior students should be actively associated with this programme. Group discussions and individual conferences can be arranged for the purpose and, where necessary, guided campus tours will also be helpful.

Health centres should be established on every university campus and in townships with a large student population to provide for medical examination, follow-up treatment, and emergency care. The UGC may explore the possibility of organizing health services for university teachers and students on the lines of the contributory health service organized for the employees of the Government of India.

Guidance and Counseling: Guidance and Counseling programme which would assist the students in the choice of courses indicate the lines of remedial action and help in dealing with emotional and psychological problems. It should be an integral part of the educational facilities provided in institutions of higher education. The employment, information and guidance bureaus of the National Employment Service and the, student advisory bureaus which have been existing in a number of universities have been doing useful work. The student advisory bureaus were originally set up by the Ministry of Education to provide information regarding facilities for higher education abroad, but also provide information regarding facilities in India. Since education and occupational information is closely interlinked, it is recommended that these bureaus may be combined for information and employment centre which should function directly under the supervision of the dean of students.

Student Activities: It is necessary that the student's energies are channeled into meaningful and challenging pursuits. It is also necessary to develop a rich and varied programme of co-curricular activities, which would include lecturers, debates, essay competitions, group discussions, cultural programmes and contests, study circles, social service

camps, NCC, tours and excursions, sports and tournaments, publication of students' journals, educational film shows, conduct of student libraries, canteens and co-operative stores and welfare activities connected with financial and medical assistance to students. Many of these activities are even now a part of the programme in good institutions.

Administration of Welfare Services: The advice, support and initiative of the vice-chancellor or principal are indispensable for an imaginative and effective programme of student welfare. He should be expected to participate in academic work to the extent possible and regarded as a member of the academic community.

Hostel Management: A common problem in University hostels is the student demand for better accommodation, food and other facilities. Hostel messes are a permanent source of trouble. The best way to deal with such problems is to encourage students to assume full responsibility for running their hostels and messes. If necessary, co-operatives could be formed for the purpose, and where necessary teacher guidance or technical help particularly in financial matters could be made available.

Hostels and Day-Study Centres: At present, hostel facilities have been provided for about 18 per cent of the enrolment at the university stage. There is need to expand these considerably and we suggest that an effort should be made to provide hostel accommodation for about 25 per cent of the enrolment at the undergraduate stage and 50 per cent of the enrolment at the postgraduate stage. In professional courses like agriculture, engineering or medicine, the extent of hostel facilities provided is already fairly high. Moreover, the running costs should be kept down to the minimum and there should be provision for a good deal of self-help by the students.

Student Unions: Student unions represent an important way of providing student participation in university life outside the class room, properly organized. They help in self-government and self-discipline, provide a healthy outlet for students' energies and give the students useful training in the use of democratic methods. Membership of the student unions should be automatic in the sense that every student should be presumed to be its member. It may be desirable to elect the office-bearers, not directly by the large body of students, but indirectly by the different students' societies in the university who would send selected representatives to the union executive. There should be some disqualifications for office bearers.

Lack Physical Facilities: Physical facilities available

in the laboratory and the library are important for quality improvement. They are to be properly equipped. At present the practical are reduced to mere rituals. The financial crunch is also faced by higher educational institutions in our country. The resources provided for education in terms of the percentage of GNP or budget of the government has gone down. It will be suicidal for our nation to neglect higher education. The country could neglect higher education only at the cost of its future.

Quality of Infrastructure: The quality of infrastructure and the quality of education are closely interlinked. The quality of infrastructure available in educational institutions is not up to the mark. The Kothari Commission of 1964 stipulated that the number of whole time students to be admitted to a college or university department should be determined with reference to laboratory, library and other facilities. But, after five decades the system is rapped and became dysfunctional. The infrastructure, laboratories, library are poorly organised. The physical facilities such as class rooms and other inputs are very poor. Class rooms are not fully equipped. The library facilities are limited and many libraries are not able to buy standard books and journals. Multiple copies of text books are not available. Reading facilities are limited. Laboratories are not fully equipped with modern equipment. Practical work is reduced to mere rituals.

Autonomy: Autonomy for colleges and university departments was to be conferred on those institutions with a track record of qualitative performance to permit them flexibility for creativity, ability to bring in change in relatively shorter period, and control over their own needs. The technological explosion in the field of mass communication has resulted in operating vast opportunities for education in a non-formal mode. We all agree that absolute autonomy is not possible and does not exist anywhere; on the other hand we also agree that educational institutions must interact with society and government for better education and greater social effectiveness.

Financial Problems: In recent years many universities are found facing major financial crunch. The UGC is the funding agency to the universities itself is in financial crisis and is unable to get sufficient funds from the Central Government. The major source of finance for the universities is state governments concern. The financial position of almost all the state governments in the country is very weak and the state governments are not able to grant required funds to the universities. Universities are asked to mobilise resources of their own. The fee structure in the universities is very low and hence the universities are forced to depend again on the

government for finance. Universities are facing a major financial crunch. UGC has been getting less and less funds with the result that it can no longer meet its commitments to the universities. In the initial years, while the Government funds accounted for about 57 per cent of the total income of these institutions, this has gone up to 81.5 per cent in 1983-84 and the percentage is probably even much higher today.

Conclusion: India after independence, there has been tremendous increase in institutions of higher learning in all disciplines. But with the quantitative growth has it been able to attend to the core issue of quality. India is today one of the fastest developing countries of the world with the annual growth rate going above 9%. In order to sustain that rate of

growth, there is need to increase the number of institutes and also the quality of higher education in India. To reach and achieve the future requirements there is an urgent need to relook at the Financial Resource. With the advent of globalization the character of higher education is set of change. Higher education to be meaningful and productive must have avenues for excellence to flourish and develop. There will be a premium on quality with bench making of programmes assuming importance. The impact of technologies will progressively increase. So Indian universities need to look and a head and prepare themselves for far reaching changes. Unless the quality aspect is not taken care of the malady that exists in higher education will never be eliminated.

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